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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC 00876-87
27 February 1987

MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Graham E. Fuller
Vice Chairman, National Intelligence CouncilVIA: Brig Gen Frank B. Horton III, USAF
Chairman, National Intelligence Council *DM*SUBJECT: Tower Commission Recommendation Page V-6:
The Role of the CIA

1. On page V-6 of the Tower Commission report, para 5 The Role of the CIA, the text states "The NSC staff was actively involved in the preparation of the May 20, 1985 (sic) update to the SNIE on Iran (actually 30 May). It is a matter for concern if this involvement and the strong views of the NSC members were allowed to influence the intelligence judgments contained in the update. It is also of concern that the update contained a hint that the US should change its existing policy and encourage its allies to provide arms to Iran. It is critical that the line between intelligence and advocacy of a particular policy be preserved if intelligence is to retain its integrity and perform its proper function. In this instance the CIA came close enough to the line to warrant concern."

-- This analysis by the Tower Commission in our opinion erroneously blurs the distinction between intelligence and policy mechanisms. While the Commission--perhaps understandably--may have reached this conclusion through limited knowledge of the mechanics of this relationship--these important distinctions need to be addressed in this memo.

2. "The NSC staff was actively involved in the preparation of the SNIE." In fact, the NSC had no participation whatsoever in writing, coordinating or in reaching the conclusions of the 30 May 1985 SNIE on Iran.

-- The NSC was correctly and properly involved in using existing mechanisms to task the Intelligence Community, through the NIC, on issues of policy concern to them. The NSC regularly tasks the

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Intelligence Community for Estimates and provides the rationale and bureaucratic purpose for which these Estimates are intended to be used. The NSC usually sets forth the key areas of concern it wishes to be addressed. This tasking procedure is the norm and not the exception.

- The Intelligence Community considers that any questions of an intelligence nature coming from the NSC, or any other policy body, is entirely valid and must be answered. However,
- The NIC has never allowed policy bodies to fully dictate even the total framework of questions to the community. While we are, of course, responsive to specific questions asked, we have never hesitated to raise and answer other questions we feel are appropriate to shedding full light on the policy question--and to avoid being boxed into a narrow, leading, and possibly misleading framework of questions.
- The Community is fiercely jealous in guarding the integrity of the estimative process. Representatives of the policy Community are never part of the drafting process nor are they permitted to be present in the room when the coordination process is under way. Every NIO is well aware of his responsibility to maintain a stance independent of the policy community and indeed the Community representatives are highly sensitive to the merest suggestion that they might be under manipulation by policymakers; they are properly vociferous in their objections to any suggestion of Community accommodation to policy wishes. Indeed, the NIO in question, Graham Fuller, who chaired a three year series of Iran Estimates, also chaired another series of three Estimates on Lebanon in 1983-84 which were highly uncongenial to policymakers.
- Although distinctions between the intelligence and policy process--as the Tower Commission notes--must be and is carefully preserved, there is a clear interrelationship between the two bodies. The NIO, to be effective, must enjoy broad access to the policy Community and to be aware of their activities and intelligence needs. Intelligence that is not pertinent or illuminating to current problems is nearly worthless.
- There is a regular cycle of interchange between the intelligence and policy communities. Policymakers read intelligence, hopefully include intelligence in their decision, and in turn take actions generating new intelligence questions and analytic problems. The dialogue is essential. Yet each side must understand its role clearly and preserve its independence. Gray areas inevitably exist where policy meets intelligence--particularly at the NIO level. Only a clear understanding by the NIO and the Intelligence Community of its independent stature will permit these gray areas

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to be safely traversed. We believe these distinctions are well understood, appreciated, and jealously guarded.

3. Virtually every Estimate written includes a section called Policy Implications for the US. This section attempts to draw for the policymaker the Intelligence Community's best sense of how our analysis impacts upon decisionmaking. It tends to suggest a range of de facto constraints--based on the realities of a foreign situation--within which policymakers must operate. It should avoid being policy prescriptive, but must be policy relevant.

4. The NSC tasker of 1 May 1985. Against the general background above, a few specific points must be drawn about the May 1 tasker calling for an updated SNIE on Iran.

- The tasker specifically cites previous intelligence (an earlier SNIE dated 18 October 1984, and a 28 March 1985 independent DDI publication--Iran: Prospects for Near-Term Instability) as basis for its concerns about possible deterioration of stability in Iran.
- The tasker specifically makes clear to the Intelligence Community its request for an Estimate prior to a planned review of US policy options and states that an NSDD will be developed for future NSPG consideration and approval on Iran policy. There was no doubt in anyone's mind why the NSC sought this information and the purpose for which it would be used.
- The tasker proceeds to pose questions about Iran--questions which would be highly relevant to any intelligence review of Iran. Even by benefit of hindsight the tasker gives no indication or hint of any independent activity that would then or now excite the suspicions of the Intelligence Community as to an alternate agenda. The Community itself had no inkling of other NSC operations under way. Needless to say, the Community would not in any case limit its response exclusively to those questions posed by the NSC.
- The tasker states that "particular attention should be given to possible opportunities for, as well as threats to, US interests" in the situation. The NSC clearly sought Community consideration of the policymakers' range of options. In the event, the SNIE suggested that US options were highly limited and that US influence could be exerted primarily only through third parties.
- The NSC tasker explicitly requested the Community to highlight areas in which intelligence information was weak or uncertain--hardly suggestive of a desire for a ringing affirmation of NSC's own agenda.

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- Neither Graham Fuller as NIO nor the NIC had any role whatsoever in writing or even conceiving the tasker. Fuller was, however, obviously aware of NSC policy concerns--some of which he clearly shared--and was aware that a tasker would be coming.
- It should be noted that the 1 May NSC tasker preceded Fuller's 17 May 85 memo to the DCI which set forth his own independent concerns for the geopolitical situation in Iran--the subject of other memos by him for some time.

5. A review of correspondence and material related to preparation of the Estimate indicates that the established Intelligence/policy process was implemented, and the objectivity and independence of intelligence analysis was preserved. No skirting of established procedures occurred in the preparation of this, or earlier, or subsequent Estimates on Iran.

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6. It is worth pointing out that Fuller has been actively involved in producing a continuum of personal analysis and "think pieces" for the DCI's benefit all the while supervising Community analysis on ongoing Intelligence Estimates. These personal views have regularly been shared with appropriate DDI analytic offices, and were regularly articulated at Community monthly Warning Meetings. The NIO's personal views have been well known--as are the views of other key analysts. Nearly every NIO handles his job in the same way--offering advice and counsel to the DCI freely, informing the Community of his own analytical concerns and thoughts--often in formative stages--testing hypotheses, and bestirring the Community to constant consideration of alternative analytic views.

7. Fuller's 17 May memo was written exclusively at his own initiative and is part of a series of memos presenting evolving views of his concerns for the geostrategic relationship of Iran and possibilities for US influence there.

- Fuller's May 17 memo was sent to then DDI/Chairman/NIC Gates for his information, although the memo was addressed directly to the DCI. Fuller distributed the memo to a handful of key policy people

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as well as to appropriate analytical elements within the DI. He had general license to do so from DCI Casey, and Casey may have passed the memo on to others--as he very frequently did to encourage broad interchange. Bob Gates took no hand in distributing to policymakers this or any other memo that Fuller wrote to the Community. That responsibility was carried out by Fuller and/or the DCI.

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8. We wish to draw attention to SSCI's 15 August 1986 memo to the DCI providing a study and critique of Intelligence Community production--drawn up following a long review of Community production by SSCI staffers. That study among other things, establishes a set of desirable criteria for intelligence production including statements that:

- "the product should be written with a thematic approach"
- "the product should offer interpretation"
- "the product should offer retrospective analysis"
- "the product should highlight both opportunities and risks for policy"
- "the product should explore the effects of alternative policy options."

9. Among the major final recommendations of the 1986 SSCI study is the recommendation: "once the production of intelligence reporting has begun, the National Intelligence Officer or other appropriate official should consult regularly with the principal consumer to ensure that the concept paper, terms of reference, or other guidance address the appropriate question. This is particularly important with respect to unscheduled product."

10. While we fully concurred with each of the above SSCI suggestions and recommendations, we also noted in our response to the committee that: "While we can and do honor the policymakers' questions in full, the NIO must also insure that the questions are broadly framed and address any important questions not asked by the policymaker that have a direct impact on the understanding of the problem."

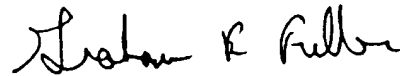
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11. We believe SSCI's recommendation above were an integral part of the intelligence/policy process which took place between the NIC and the NSC in the preparation of the 30 May 1985 SNIE on Iran.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Graham E. Fuller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Graham" being more prominent.

Graham E. Fuller

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